


Is That **REALLY** a Law?

**Why pickles
must bounce in
Connecticut and
other unusual
statutes around
the nation**

BY ALESSANDRA POTENZA
AND BROOKE ROSS

Try buying a car on Sunday in Minnesota, hunting for Bigfoot in Washington State, or dancing to the national anthem in Massachusetts, and you could be arrested or fined. Well, at least in theory. There are many odd-sounding laws on the books around the U.S. today. Some are actually null (they have no legal or binding force) because they're decades or even centuries old, no longer serve any purpose, or are unconstitutional by today's standards. But no matter how weird they sound to us today, these laws often made sense, at least to some people, at the time. Here are some of the unusual laws we found around the U.S.

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Leave Bigfoot Alone! WASHINGTON

Hunting Bigfoot, the mythical ape-man also known as Sasquatch, is strictly off-limits in two Washington State counties. In 1992, Whatcom County declared itself a Sasquatch refuge and protection area. According to lawmakers, if Bigfoot did exist, it would be endangered and need protection. The law is also meant to prevent hunters from accidentally shooting people mistaken for the giant creature, whose legend dates back to early Native American tribes. But if you *do* manage to kill the real Bigfoot, just make sure it isn't in Skamania County. Since 1969, the county has had a Sasquatch protection ordinance: Bigfoot's killer faces a \$1,000 fine and up to one year in prison.

Ahr-KAN-zuhs?

Ahr-kan-SAW!



Don't Mispronounce Our Name!

ARKANSAS

How do you say Arkansas? You better know before you visit the state. An 1881 resolution that's still on the books says the final *s* in "Arkansas" should be silent. In short, don't pronounce it "Ahr-KAN-zuhs," like the state of Kansas. The controversy dates back to 1673, when French explorers first met the Arkansas Indians. The French couldn't quite understand the tribe's name and most settlers pronounced "Arkansas" with a silent *s*. But even when Congress created the Territory of "Arkansaw" in 1819, confusion over how to pronounce it persisted. Finally, the state legislature stepped in to settle the issue. Says Arkansas historian Michael Dougan: "It's a matter of honor that the name of the state be pronounced correctly."

Drop Those Pickles!

CONNECTICUT

A pickle has to bounce to be considered a pickle in Connecticut. The regulation has its roots in a 1948 incident in which pickle packers Sidney Sparer and Moses Dexler were arrested for selling rotten pickles "unfit for human consumption," according to the Connecticut State Library. After the men's arrest, Connecticut's food and drug commissioner shared a tip with reporters for weeding out good pickles from the bad: Drop them from a height of 1 foot, and if they bounce, they're safe to eat. The pickles in question did not bounce. Sparer and Dexler were fined \$500—the maximum penalty—and their pickles were destroyed. Connecticut's bouncing-pickle regulation went into effect soon afterward.



No Dancing to 'The Star-Spangled Banner'! MASSACHUSETTS

If you hear the national anthem in Massachusetts, think twice before feeling the beat. A state law bans dancing to "The Star-Spangled Banner" and even playing or singing less than the entire song in public. Violators could be slapped with a \$100 fine. The law was passed in 1917, as the U.S. was entering World War I (1914-18) and patriotic feelings ran high. Though "The Star-Spangled Banner" didn't become the national anthem until 1931,

it was already widely used at public events. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson ordered it to be played at military occasions, and starting in 1918 it was played at baseball games. Experts say the law can't be enforced today because it violates the First Amendment. "It's basically requiring citizens to show respect for the national anthem," says Dwight Duncan, a law professor at the University of Massachusetts. "That goes too far under freedom of speech."



It's Sunday: You Can't Buy a Car! MINNESOTA

Need some new wheels? If you're in Minnesota, don't try buying a car if it's Sunday. You could wind up in jail for 90 days or be fined up to \$1,000. A 1957 law bans the sale of new or used vehicles on Sundays. Laws that bar certain acts on Sundays are called *blue laws*. Dating back to the 17th-century Puritans in Connecticut, they're based on the belief that Sundays should be for church and rest. (The origin of the term is unknown, but it may come from the disparaging use of the word *blue* as "rigidly moral" in the 1700s.) Many blue laws have been eased over the years, but in Minnesota—and 13 other states—buying a car is still a no-no on Sundays. Some say the law doesn't make sense today, but most auto dealers are all for it. The law guarantees them a day off when they don't have to worry about losing business to competition. As Scott Lambert of the Minnesota Automobile Dealers Association told the *Star Tribune*: "I cannot find a constituency that wants the law removed." •

